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## STAFF NOTES:

# Middle East Africa South Asia

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## MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Malagasy Republic

*Ratsiraka Deals with Officer Corps*

Leftist President Didier Ratsiraka has taken steps this month to dispel disenchantment with his leadership that has recently surfaced in the Malagasy officer corps.

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[REDACTED] The ethnic cleavages in Malagasy society and the rivalry between the army and the gendarmerie are factors likely to promote continuing instability, however. Ratsiraka, who came to power in mid-June, is the fourth person to head the government of the Indian Ocean island so far this year.

Ratsiraka, a naval officer and former foreign minister, moved to visibly assert his leadership by calling ranking armed forces officers together for a five-day meeting earlier this month. He apparently sought to soften up those cool toward him by holding out the promise of a major program of arms acquisition, including planes, helicopters, and naval craft. The imminent retirement of the chief of staff was also announced, giving Ratsiraka the opportunity to begin remaking the army leadership in his own image.

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In addition to the long-standing ethnic and military rivalries that have kept the Malagasy pot boiling this year, the government's sharp turn to the left

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under Ratsiraka, as well as his autocratic behavior in attempting to exclude other members of the Supreme Revolutionary Council from decision-making, are apparently behind some of the reports of disenchantment with Ratsiraka.

Some offices also may have no stomach for Ratsiraka's plans for the armed forces. During his recently concluded marathon policy speech, in which Ratsiraka set forth his revolutionary socialist program, he indicated that the army would soon undergo a basic reorganization and would be sent to the countryside to engage in civic action programs and work with the peasants. In Ratsiraka's eyes, the military ought to become the "spearhead of the socialist construction of the fatherland."

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Comoro Islands

*Central Government Seizes Anjouan Island*

In the midst of negotiations with France, the ruling national executive council of the Comoro Islands is trying to establish its control over the four-island Indian Ocean chain.

According to Paris radio, a 100-man force under the direction of the council seized control of Anjouan island on Sunday. The invaders apparently met little resistance. Anjouan, the second largest island in the archipelago, has been controlled by former Comorian leader Ahmed Abdallah since he was ousted as head of the central government on August 3 by forces favorable to maintaining a working relationship with Paris. Before his overthrow, Abdallah appeared to be moving toward a complete rupture with France following the islands' unilateral declaration of independence in early July. Abdallah and some of his followers are reported to be still at large on the island.

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A French official said on September 3 that negotiations between Paris and the Comorian council concerning the transfer of powers previously exercised by France had gotten under way a few days earlier. According to the official, however, the island of Mayotte is "still within the framework of French law." He said that a poll will be organized to determine the destiny of that island, many of whose residents wish to become part of France. The government at Moroni seems determined that

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Mayotte remain part of the Comoros, but may be willing to offer the island considerable autonomy in an effort to persuade its residents to abandon their interest in incorporation in France.

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